

# OLYMPIC COAST NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

## OLYMPIC COAST DISCOVERY CENTER



V O L U N T E E R   N E W S L E T T E R   -   S E P T E M B E R   2 0 0 9



### Thank you volunteers

It has been a busy summer in the Olympic Coast Discovery Center. Since Memorial Day we have had 4815 visitors from 47 states and 15 countries. Looking back through the guest book there are many, many comments on our informative, eye-opening displays; and also lots of compliments about the friendly, knowledgeable volunteers who make the OCDC a special place for families and especially for children. Thanks to everyone who has helped create this nurturing environment in our visitor center, with special thanks to Lisbeth Jardine, Jim Fedderly, and Bruce Ferguson – our top volunteers for August. Thanks also to Carol Huard, Joanne Huemoeller, and Jim Fedderly for spending a long day in the hot sun at Streamfest talking to visitors about marine debris and its terrible impact on life in the ocean. Our message is an urgent one....

### Our Plastic Legacy Afloat (NY Times 8/27/09)

Until recently, the earth had seven continents. To that number, humans have added an eighth

- an amorphous, floating mass of waste plastic trapped in a gyre of currents in the north Pacific, between Hawaii and Japan. Researchers have estimated that this garbage patch may contain as much as 100 million tons of plastic debris and is perhaps twice the size of Texas, if not larger.

Now comes what could be more bad news. A new study, announced at a recent meeting of the American Chemical Society, suggests that plastics in seawater break down faster than expected. As they do, they apparently release contaminants, including potentially harmful styrene compounds not normally found in nature. This was not merely a laboratory finding. The author of the study, Katsuhiko Saigo, a scientist at Nihon University in Japan, found the same chemical compounds in seawater samples collected near Malaysia, the Pacific Northwest, and in the northern Pacific.



The effects of these broken-down plastics on marine organisms is as yet unknown, and they will be harder to measure than the damage that plastic refuse does to sea-life. But adding to the contaminant load of the oceans cannot be a good thing.

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What we are seeing here is yet another of the large-scale, potentially tragic, uncontrolled experiments that humans have conducted on their environment without intending to. And though we cannot do much about the millions of tons that have already been sent to sea, we can at least begin to ask ourselves, when we get ready to pitch a plastic container, where is this likely to end up?

### ***“Running the Numbers”***

#### **A new addition to the OCDC library**

Just how much waste is generated in our country every day? In *Running the Numbers: An American Self-Portrait* by Chris Jordan looks at contemporary American culture through the austere lens of statistics. Each image portrays a specific quantity of something: fifteen million sheets of office paper (five minutes of paper use); 106,000 aluminum cans (thirty seconds of can consumption) or ten thousand dog and cat collars (the average number of unwanted dogs and cats euthanized in the United States every day). (\*Dog and Cat Collars.jpg)

*Running the Numbers* should arrive in the OCDC library Friday, but for an even better look at these startling images, check out Jordan’s website at [http://www.chrisjordan.com/current\\_set2.php](http://www.chrisjordan.com/current_set2.php) or listen to him explaining images from his second book at <http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/08/19/a-new-view-of-humanitys-planet/>

### **September 22 - Volunteer Appreciation**

Our annual volunteer appreciation event will

be held at the Olympic National Park visitor center on Race Street on Tuesday, September 22, beginning with a potluck supper at 5:30. Please call or email by September 18 to let us know if you will attend.

### **October 3 – Andy Lamb at Feiro Marine Life Center**

Marine naturalist, educator, and author Andy Lamb, will be at the Feiro Marine Life Center on Saturday, October 3 for a lecture on the kelp forest community. He will also bring signed copies of his newest book *Marine Life of the Pacific Northwest*. Call the Feiro Marine Life Center at 417-6254 to reserve a seat. A suggested donation of \$5 helps continue this lecture series.

### **October 10 and 11 – Dungeness Crab and Seafood Festival**

We will be representing the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary with a display focusing on sustainable seafood. Please call or send an email if you would like to be involved.

### **October 22 – Flower Garden Banks, a retrospective**

Looking back at my trip to Texas, what I learned about the Gulf of Mexico, coral reefs, hurricanes, and oil companies. I’ll bring a big pot of chili – you are invited to contribute bread or salads, and we’ll serve ice cream for dessert. Please RSVP by October 20.

### **December 16 – OCDC volunteer holiday party**

Save the afternoon of Wednesday, December 16

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for our annual Christmas party at the Lamont's house. Details to follow, but we've had a request for a white elephant gift exchange, so be on the lookout for that perfect gift lurking in the back corner of a drawer or closet.

### **Update on Becky Jewell**

Becky is more than halfway through her first round of intensive chemotherapy at Virginia Mason Hospital in Seattle. If she has no infection or fever she will come home on September 8 for ten days of rest before starting the whole procedure a second time. Hopefully this second round can be administered locally. Becky enjoys phone calls, cards and emails, but she is not allowed to have flowers in her room. Becky's birthday is September 6. Let's send her an avalanche of birthday cards!